

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Beuno

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: April 21

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IN BRIEF

Saint Beuno

7th-century Welsh missionary monk, founder of the monastery of Clynnog Fawr.

Feast day	April 21, April 20 (Wales)
Born	Late 6th century, Powys, traditionally Berriew, Wales
Died	c. 640, on April 21 according to tradition, Clynnog Fawr, Wales
Era	7th century
Patron saint of	Clynnog Fawr, sick children (popular devotion)

In this booklet

Life

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Beuno

Saint Beuno was a 7th-century Welsh monk, a missionary in North Wales and founder of the monastery of Clynnog Fawr, on the Llŷn Peninsula, where he died around 640. According to tradition he was the uncle of Saint Winefride, whom he is said to have raised to life at Holywell, and he is one of the most venerated saints of Wales. His feast day is April 21; in Wales, the national calendar celebrates him on April 20.

Who was Saint Beuno?

Beuno (in Latin *Bennonus*) belongs to the "Age of the Saints" in Wales, the 6th and 7th centuries, when missionary monks founded communities called *clas* throughout the country, at once monasteries and centers of prayer for the surrounding area. More than a dozen churches are dedicated to him, mostly in North Wales. He is often considered the most popular Welsh saint after Saint David.

His life is known from a medieval Welsh biography, the *Buchedd Beuno*, written several centuries after his time and full of wondrous stories. Historians recognize a plausible core: a monk from the aristocracy of Powys, active as a missionary in Gwynedd, and founder of Clynnog. The dates remain approximate.



Saint Beuno's Church, Clynnog Fawr, on the site of his monastery.

Key dates in the life of Saint Beuno

- **Late 6th century**: Born in Powys, traditionally at Berriew in the upper Severn valley, into a princely family.
- **Youth**: He studies and becomes a priest in a monastery, perhaps at Bangor according to some traditions.
- **Early 7th century**: He founds a first community at Berriew, then sets out for the north, where he evangelizes with the support of King Cadfan of Gwynedd.
- **According to tradition**: At Holywell, he restores to life his niece Winefride, beheaded by a rejected suitor.
- **Around 630**: After a dispute with King Cadwallon, he receives the land of Clynnog Fawr from the king's cousin Gwyddaint and founds his monastery there.

- **Around 640**: Dies at Clynnog, on April 21 according to tradition, "the seventh day after Easter," and is buried there.

A missionary of North Wales

Said to be the grandson of a prince of Powys, Beuno chose monastic life. After his training and ordination, he founded a first community on his family's lands at Berriew.

The *Buchedd* tells that one day, hearing English voices across the River Severn, he took it as a sign of a coming invasion and decided to move west. He went to North Wales, where King Cadfan of Gwynedd granted him his protection. Beuno preached, baptized, and founded churches and communities.

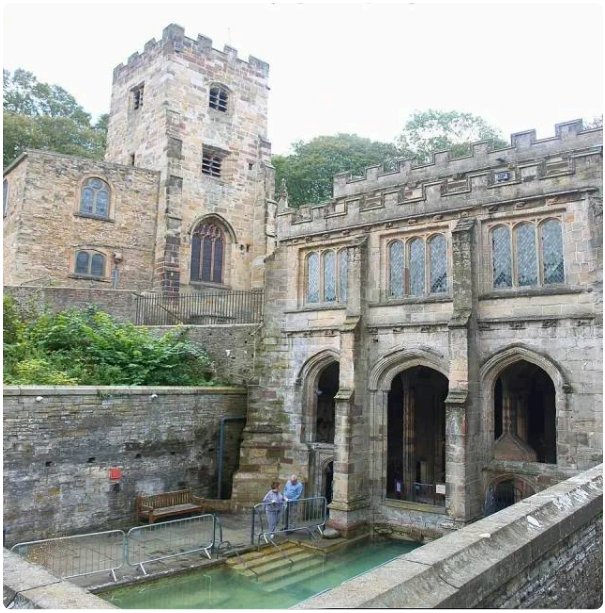
Cadfan's son, Cadwallon, was less favorable: he deceived the saint over a promised piece of land. Beuno publicly rebuked him for his injustice. It was then that Gwyddaint, the king's cousin, gave his lands at Clynnog Fawr, on the coast of the Llŷn Peninsula, "forever" to God and to Beuno. There Beuno established his monastery, which for centuries remained one of the great religious centers of North Wales.

Beuno and Saint Winefride

The most famous episode of his legend involves his niece, Saint Winefride. According to tradition, a young prince named Caradog tried to force himself on her. She fled toward the church where Beuno was praying; the prince caught her and cut off her head. Where her head fell, a spring burst forth.

Beuno came out of the church, placed the head back on the body and prayed, and the young woman came back to life. The place, called Holywell (Treffynnon in Welsh), became one of the great pilgrimages of Britain and is still visited today. Winefride later became a nun.

The stories also credit Beuno with other raisings from the dead and healings. Above all, they show the immense trust the Welsh placed in his prayer.



Saint Winefride's Well, Holywell, linked to the legend of Saint Beuno.

Devotion to Saint Beuno

Beuno died at Clynnog around 640, and his tomb immediately became a place of pilgrimage. For centuries people came there seeking healing. A custom still recorded in the 18th and 19th centuries was to bathe the sick, especially children, in the water of Saint Beuno's Well, not far from the church, and then have them spend the night in the chapel near his tomb. Calves and lambs born with a particular mark on the ear, "Beuno's marks," were also offered to the saint.

Clynnog was a stopping place on the road of pilgrims heading to Bardsey Island, the "island of twenty thousand saints." Today the North Wales Pilgrim's Way still passes through Clynnog and Saint Beuno's Well.

The saint's name is also borne by St Beuno's, the Jesuit spiritual center at Tremeirchion, near St Asaph, where the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins studied theology.

Why is Saint Beuno invoked for sick children?

His patronage of sick children comes from popular devotion rather than from an official decision. For centuries parents brought their sick children to his well and to his tomb at Clynnog, trusting in the prayer of the saint who, according to his legend, had restored Winefride to life. He is also the patron of Clynnog Fawr.

Beuno is the saint of trust in prayer and of courage in the face of injustice. He did not fear to rebuke the king for his dishonesty, and he spent his life bringing Christian communities to birth in regions still little evangelized. His legend with Winefride expresses faith in a God stronger than violence and death. Catholics pray to him for the sick, especially children, for Wales, for pilgrims and for those who suffer injustice.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Beuno in art

He is shown as a Celtic abbot or bishop, holding a crozier and sometimes blessing. He is often depicted with Saint Winefride, recalling the story of Holywell.

Where to pray to Saint Beuno

- **Clynnog Fawr** (Gwynedd, Wales): Saint Beuno's Church and its chapel, on the site of his tomb, and Saint Beuno's Well nearby.
- **Holywell** (Flintshire): Saint Winefride's Well, linked to his legend.
- **Tremeirchion** (Denbighshire): St Beuno's Jesuit spiritual center.

- **Berriew** (Powys): the church that bears his name, in his homeland according to tradition.

To pray with him, use the prayer to Saint Beuno or the novena to Saint Beuno, which ends on his feast day.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Beuno, Monk of Wales

Saint Beuno, missionary monk and founder of Clynnog Fawr, has been prayed to in Wales since the early Middle Ages, especially for the healing of the sick and of children. The old Welsh prayers addressed to him are not in common use in English today. This page offers an original prayer by Saintspedia, inspired by his life and legend.

Prayer to Saint Beuno

Saint Beuno, monk and missionary, you left your homeland to proclaim Christ in the mountains and along the coasts of Wales: give me the courage to bear witness to my faith where I live.

You dared to rebuke the king for his injustice: be the support of those who are deceived, robbed or despised. Teach me to defend justice with firmness and without hatred.

According to tradition, you restored Saint Winefride to life: remind me that God is stronger than violence and death. Watch over victims of violence, especially girls and women.

So many of the sick came to you seeking healing: look with kindness on those who suffer, above all sick children and their parents. I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Go with the pilgrims who walk the roads of Wales, and with all who seek God. Through your intercession, may my life become a spring where others can draw peace. Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

Intentions to entrust to Saint Beuno

- For the sick, and especially sick children.
- For victims of violence and injustice.
- For Wales and its Christian communities.
- For pilgrims and all who walk the ways of faith.
- For missionaries and those who found communities.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Beuno's feast day is April 21; in Wales it is celebrated on April 20. You can also pray to him on pilgrimage, at the bedside of a sick child, or when you face an injustice. For nine days of prayer, see the novena to Saint Beuno, and read the life of Saint Beuno.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Beuno

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life and legend of Saint Beuno, missionary monk of North Wales and founder of Clynnog Fawr. It is not an official liturgical text. To end on his feast day, begin on April 13: the ninth day then falls on April 21. In Wales, where he is celebrated on April 20, begin on April 12. Since his feast falls in the Easter season, this novena is also a way to pray with the joy of the Resurrection.

Why pray this novena?

Beuno's story moves from a princely home in Powys to the wild coasts of Llŷn, through mission, conflict with a king, the miracle of Holywell and centuries of prayer at his tomb. Over nine days we follow these stages. This novena is especially suited to praying for a sick child or a sick loved one, for victims of violence, for Wales and for pilgrims.

How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then pray an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The suggested act carries the prayer into your day.

You may begin each day with this opening prayer: *Lord, you made Saint Beuno a messenger of your Gospel and a channel of your healing. Through his intercession, look on those I carry in my heart and hear the prayer I bring you today. Amen.*

If you miss a day, simply continue where you left off.

Day 1: A prince who chose God

Beuno was born into a princely family of Powys, yet he chose the life of a monk. He preferred the treasure of the Kingdom to the honors of the world.

Prayer: Lord, help me choose what lasts. Through Saint Beuno, free me from the desire for status and make me rich in you. Amen.

Today: Do a good deed quietly, without seeking recognition.

Day 2: Leaving home

Hearing foreign voices across the Severn, Beuno understood that he had to move on. He left his first community and set out for the north.

Prayer: Lord, when life forces me to leave what I know, give me trust in your guidance. Bless all who must leave their homes. Amen.

Today: Pray for refugees and for families who have had to move.

Day 3: Sowing the Gospel

In Gwynedd, Beuno preached, baptized and founded churches. Many of the communities of North Wales trace their faith back to him.

Prayer: Lord, bless missionaries and all who proclaim your Word. Make me a sower of the Gospel where I live. Amen.

Today: Pray for your parish and for those who first brought the faith to your land.

Day 4: Speaking truth to power

When King Cadwallon deceived him, Beuno rebuked him publicly. He did not let injustice pass in silence.

Prayer: Lord of justice, give me courage to defend what is right, firmly and without hatred. Support those who are cheated and despised. Amen.

Today: Stand up, in a small way, for someone treated unfairly.

Day 5: A gift forever

Gwyddaint gave his land at Clynnog to God and to Beuno "forever." Generosity can build something that outlasts us.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for all who have given to your Church. Make me generous with what I have. Amen.

Today: Make a gift to your parish or to a work of the Church.

Day 6: Stronger than violence

According to tradition, Beuno restored Winefride to life after she was killed for refusing a prince. Where her head fell, a spring burst forth.

Prayer: Lord, you are stronger than violence and death. Through Saint Beuno and Saint Winefride, protect girls and women from violence and heal those who have suffered it. Amen.

Today: Pray for, or support, an organization that helps victims of violence.

Day 7: Healing for the sick

For centuries, parents brought sick children to Beuno's well and to his tomb. They trusted that God would hear his prayer.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you laid your hands on children and healed the sick. Through Saint Beuno, look on sick children and their parents and give them strength and healing. Amen.

Today: Visit, call or help a sick person or a family with a sick child.

Day 8: On the pilgrim road

Clynnog was a stopping place for pilgrims on the way to Bardsey, the island of twenty thousand saints. The North Wales Pilgrim's Way still passes by.

Prayer: Lord, I am a pilgrim on this earth. Through Saint Beuno, guide my steps and bring me home to you. Amen.

Today: Take a walk in prayer, offering each step to God.

Day 9: A death in the Easter season

Beuno died at Clynnog around 640, on April 21 according to tradition, "the seventh day after Easter." His tomb became a place of prayer for centuries.

Prayer: Risen Lord, through the intercession of Saint Beuno, I bring you once more the intention of this novena. Grant it if it is your will, and lead me to share in your Resurrection. Amen.

Today: Pray for Wales and for all its Christian communities.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Beuno, monk and missionary of Wales, you proclaimed Christ, defended justice and prayed for the sick with great faith. Pray for sick children and their parents, for victims of violence, for pilgrims and for the people of Wales. Obtain for us a living faith, a courageous heart and the hope that nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God. Amen.*

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia. Continue with the prayer to Saint Beuno or read his life.

CREDITS

Credits and sources

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